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## **Former NH Supreme Court Justice William Batchelder Honored Batchelder First Recipient of PSU's Blair Medal**

**PLYMOUTH, N.H.**- Over 100 friends and family came together to honor former State Supreme Court Justice William Batchelder at a surprise celebration at the Plymouth Common Man Inn Saturday, July 18. The event was the brainchild of the evening's hosts, Common Man Inn owner Alex Ray and the Reverend Sidney Lovett of Holderness.

"Celebrating Bill Batchelder is long overdue," Lovett said. "Alex and I are thrilled that we were able to conspire with the Batchelder family and pull this surprise event together."

### **Bill Batchelder "fellow traveler ..."**

The list of luminaries celebrating Batchelder was a venerable who's who of the New Hampshire legal community including recently retired US Supreme Court Associate Justice David Souter, current New Hampshire Supreme Court Chief Justice John Broderick, Walter Murphy, Batchelder's law partner for nearly 50 years, and former Governor Walter Peterson.

"What makes this job worth doing? It is not the high moment when you have conducted the error-free trial," Souter said. "It is not being the appellate court judge who writes the opinion that is in the case books for the next generation.

"What motivates us is extraordinarily simple. In a world with concentrations of power, there is a constant value in courtrooms. A place that is safe from that power. A place where that power is

not going to be the determining factor. We don't think about these things everyday but they are in the back of our minds.

“What we do think about are the colleagues we have who share these values,” Souter continued.

“People who are in it for the same reasons. They make it easier to bear the difficult days.

Colleagues like Bill Batchelder. Bill and I sat together on two courts for a total of 12 years. We were friends before that. We will always be friends. I think this has been a lucky year for me.

The omen for that is the fact that the first voice I heard on New Year's Day was Bill Batchelder's wishing me a Happy New Year.

“This is symptomatic of a friendship that has not been interrupted by a great many absences. We may have been miles apart but we were traveling together. My contribution to this evening is to simply say, ‘Bill, thanks for being a fellow traveler with me.’”

For State Supreme Court Chief Justice John Broderick the opportunity to regularly spend time with Batchelder over the years means much to him.

He enjoys catching up with his friend as they regularly meet for lunch in Ashland. “But it is the conversations we have while sitting in the car in his driveway after lunch that mean the most to me.... Those moments are special.

“I have benefitted from his friendship and wisdom,” Broderick said. “When I think of Judge ‘Batch’ I think of quintessential New Hampshire.

“He serves as an example to me as to what a judge should be. He is always interested in how to make things better and more just. This gathering is a testimonial to this.”

Walter Murphy had just graduated from college when he went to work for Batchelder in 1962. He was going to stay in New Hampshire for only two or three years and then move on. Forty-seven years later, he is still here and Batchelder is a primary reason for that. Murphy said that it was true that Batchelder was a great trial lawyer who was able to charm juries.

“But Bill is more than that. He is an example of what it is that all people should be. He is a man for others. He has conducted his life that way,” Murphy said. “I could not be more proud to be his friend and his partner.”

Former governor Walter Peterson, who appointed Batchelder to the State Superior Court in 1970, said that he had never met anyone who did not speak about Batchelder with the highest regard.

“I have been able to call upon his wisdom. I have developed over the years a great respect for Bill Batchelder,” Peterson said.

**Bill Batchelder “... a medal to honor distinguished public service.”**

Near the end of the evening Plymouth State University President Sara Jayne Steen awarded Batchelder the Blair Medal for distinguished public service on behalf of the University.

“Today, we honor you for the ways in which you have exemplified the motto of Plymouth State University, *Ut Prosim* (That I may serve), and for the service you have given to Plymouth State University and its students and to the greater Plymouth community,” Steen said. “You have been a leader in the town and community, improving social, economic, and cultural bonds. Your leadership in the courts will have a lasting effect on the consciousness of New Hampshire.

“Tonight, Justice Batchelder, you are the first recipient of the Henry W. Blair medal for distinguished public service.”

Batchelder’s distinguished service includes his decades as a lawyer, prosecutor, Superior Court Judge, and New Hampshire Supreme Court Justice; dedication to the historical importance of the town of Plymouth and the memory of the Nathaniel P. Rogers family’s fight for abolition; his foresight and vision in the creation of the Squam Lakes Science Center for the betterment of the wildlife and environment of the Lakes Region and New Hampshire; service to the United States Navy during World War II; and volunteer efforts on behalf of the

Plymouth Rotary, Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, Pease Public Library, and Plymouth Historical Society.

“Henry W. Blair also saw the potential and beauty of the people of Plymouth. In the spirit of his character, you have shaped a life around bettering a place that you love—and that obviously loves you back.

“Justice Batchelder, there are many people who are here to honor you tonight,” Steen said. “You have been a wise and generous friend, mentor and supporter, and that’s why so many people want to be here this evening to say how much we think of you.”

This is the second time PSU has recognized Batchelder as he was the recipient of the Granite State Award for Community Service.

### **Bill Batchelder the man ...**

Born in Plymouth, New Hampshire, Batchelder received his B.A. degree from the University of New Hampshire in 1949 and his J.D. degree from Boston University Law School in 1952. In the same year he was admitted to the Massachusetts and New Hampshire Bars.

Batchelder began his general trial practice in Plymouth in 1952 and practiced until his appointment as an Associate Justice of the Superior Court in August 1970. He was appointed to the State Supreme Court in July 1981.

During his years of trial practice, Justice Batchelder was associated with the law firm of Batchelder & Murphy, and from 1959 to 1964 he was prosecuting attorney for Grafton County.

Batchelder and his wife, Betty, were married in 1955.

“He’s a father of the times. Being a father in the ’60s and ’70s was different than being a father today,” Batchelder’s son Rob said. “I’d say he bordered on brilliant. For example, within a six and a half year period he and my mom had five kids—he changed one diaper!”

In addition to their six children, the Batchelders have 13 grandchildren and “3.9 great grandchildren” as grandson Matt and his wife, Abigail, are expecting a daughter in the next several weeks.

Professionally Batchelder has received the New Hampshire Bar Association's Professionalism Award and the New Hampshire Bar Association's President's Award for Service to the Profession. He also was awarded the Silver Shingle Award from Boston University Law School. While on the Superior Court, he was Chairman of the Sentence Review Division. He has been a member of the New Hampshire Judicial Council since 1987. In addition, he was, for a period of four years, a member of the Board of Directors of the American Judicature Society, and he is currently a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation.

**Bill Batchelder “Those who know him know them together ...”**

But Batchelder’s legacy is measured by more than his profession. For 54 years, Batchelder and his wife, Betty, have committed their time and efforts to their family, the Plymouth community, and the University.

Betty Batchelder’s role as Bill’s life-long partner was not lost in this celebration. Nearly every speaker made mention of her. Chief Justice Broderick said he was a great admirer of both Bill and Betty. “Those who know him know them together.”

Alex Ray could not say one without the other, “It’s always Bill and Betty, Bill and Betty.”

And their son Rob said, “He’s called a lot of things -- Bill, your Honor, Judge, Billy. But to us, he’s Dad. He’s a fantastic Dad. But he wouldn’t be a fantastic Dad without Mom.”

Over the course of the evening there were tall tales and heartwarming remembrances, awards and accolades, and even an accusation that he cheats at cribbage.

“This was a complete surprise to me,” Batchelder said later in the evening. “I am so thankful to everyone who came and for the Blair medal. This is a very, very special evening for me.”

So does he cheat at cribbage?

Batchelder smiled and said, “I’ll never tell.”

Congratulations, Bill and Betty.